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Ministry of Advanced Education

$31.8M BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO FIRST MAJOR UBC BUILDING

VANCOUVER – The oldest academic building at the University of B.C., serving students for over 80 years, has been transformed into a world-class chemistry research and teaching facility with the help of $16 million from the Province, Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell said today.

"We've partnered with UBC to restore and upgrade the chemistry building under an innovative funding agreement called UBC Renew that is preserving the environment, taxpayers' dollars and UBC's architectural heritage," Coell said. "The result is that students and faculty have access to state-of-the-art chemistry labs where researchers can work together in a safe, productive environment."

The chemistry building, originally completed in 1923, is one of 10 projects being funded through UBC Renew, a $120-million cost-sharing partnership between the Province and UBC. Rather than demolishing and replacing deteriorating buildings, UBC Renew restores and upgrades them, saving millions of dollars in building and operating costs and months of construction time. UBC Renew projects also improve the learning environment and accessibility for thousands of students, and reduce the impact on the environment.

In the chemistry building, space has been reconfigured to create large, open and flexible labs that encourage researcher collaboration. Lecture theatres and offices have been upgraded; new heating, ventilation, plumbing, lighting, power and data systems installed; and seismic, sprinkler and other building code upgrades completed. The new finishes in the $31.8-million project are low VOC and green materials.

"The chemistry building is synonymous with UBC's history," said UBC president Stephen Toope. "The historic photo of students congregating in the concrete skeleton of this building epitomizes our student activism and the birth of the Point Grey campus. Restoring its past grandeur and modernizing the facility, all the while improving safety and sustainability, is what UBC Renew is all about."

The Province has committed $60 million through UBC Renew, which has revitalized buildings M17 and M18 for theatre and visual arts students, the chemistry north and centre buildings, and two wings of the Buchanan complex for the arts faculty. UBC estimates renewal has saved more than $45 million over the cost of replacing these buildings to date.

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A seventh project, the Friedman building, is expected to be finished this summer to provide a new home for the School of Audiology and Speech Sciences, and the School of Rehabilitation Sciences' physical therapy program. Two more projects – Buchanan B and the old auditorium – are to start this year.

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